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COLONIAL CAROLINA COOKERY



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# Colonial Carolina Cookery

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While the typical colonist's fare during the period 1663 when the Carolina Charter was granted, and 1763, the end of the Colonial Period, was somewhat drab by today's standards, holiday festivities were celebrated with more elaborate preparation. At this time, the Colonial Carolina kitchen was a busy but appetizing place to be. Colonial daughters were resigned to "watching the pot," while their brothers enjoyed games, and housewives were seldom away from their cooking chores. As a result, hearty meals of poultry and game, vegetables, salads and soups, often with many varieties for each course, were the bills of fare found on the colonist's table.

Cooking, on a grander scale, was done by servants supervised by their mistress. The kitchen was usually a separate building located near the manor and equipped with a fireplace which sometimes was as large as ten feet long, six feet high, and five feet deep. Swinging cranes and waffle irons, kettles, teapots, and tall iron firedogs holding rotating spits were fitted inside the fireplace. However, the average family cooked in huge fireplaces built into their cabins, or occasionally, in kettles placed outside the house.



From Colonial Living, by Edwin Tunis, Published by The World Publishing Co., New York, N. Y. © 1957 by Edwin Tunis

Every meal included a meat course. Aside from those meats we still enjoy today, the colonists ate pigeons, swans, cranes, plovers (shore-inhabiting birds), herons, seagulls, peacocks, blackbirds, sparrows and larks. The ordinary methods of cooking were roasting, or baking in pastry. Roasts were generally eaten cold, those baked in pastry, eaten hot. They were also broken up and made into pies and ragouts of various kinds. Early recipes instruct, "*Turkeys are perfectly permissible, Moorhens, coots and young rooks when obtainable. Moorhens and coots must be skinned, not plucked as the skin is very bitter.*"

Most of the early vegetable dishes were cooked with a great deal of spices added - salt, pepper, cloves, cinnamon, mace, and nutmeg. Spices and herbs were used as much for their supposed medicinal values as they were for seasoning. Since many herbs and spices were imported, local substitutes had to be found. Their use was also important in flavoring overripe meat in the days before refrigeration. Sometimes the meat and vegetable courses were combined in a stew such as this popular colonial recipe for "**Salamagundy:**"

*"Cooked Veal minced very small, boned pickled herring cut very small, Small pieces of cucumber, apples, boiled onions, pickled red cabbage, parsley and celery. Mince some cold pork, duck or pigeon, chop some hard boiled eggs small. Butter the outside of a small basin and put it upside-down on a dish. Lay around it so as to completely cover it rings of the ingredients in contrasting colours and flavours. Surround with any kind of pickles and sliced lemon, a bunch of nastursium flowers and leaves on top, oil and vinegar should be added on the plate after serving. Minced anchovies may also be used."*

No meal would be complete without a salad and the early colonists borrowed their "sallet" recipes from England. Lettuces, cabbage lettuces, lambs lettuce, sage, sorrel, parsley, cresses, tarragon, the white part of onions, or shallots, combined with a mixture of "choice oil 3 parts, wine vinegar 2 parts, mustard one part and a little salt, well beaten together" produced a delicious salad.

Several types of bread accompanied the meal. Baked loaves of white bread with a hard crust were the typical variety, and also present were the southeastern dishes of spoon bread and corn pone. Rye and wheat were grown, but corn meal was the most acceptable and plentiful of the grains. At the end of the meal the rounds were put on the alms plate with any scraps for the poor, and the amount given determined a man's generosity for his fellows. This practice is thought to be the origin

of "Leave a bit for Miss Manners" which was taught to children until quite recently.

Champ, similar to potato soup, and giblet soup, were popular with the colonists, and prepared in much the same way as today.

The most famous descendant of colonial cooking is greatly enjoyed today in the handed-down recipes of the first Moravian settlers in North Carolina at Bethabara. Moravian cooking is widely known for its tempting dishes and one of the most popular is the following tested recipe for Moravian Christmas Cakes (Cookies):

<i>3/4 cup butter and lard or shortening</i>	<i>4 tablespoons ground ginger</i>
<i>3/4 cup brown sugar</i>	<i>1 teaspoon salt</i>
<i>1 pint black molasses</i>	<i>1 tablespoon soda</i>
<i>7 1/2 cups sifted flour</i>	<i>1/2 cup boiling water</i>
<i>4 tablespoons ground cloves</i>	

"Cream butter and lard with sugar. Add molasses. Sift flour with spices and salt. Add soda to boiling water. Add flour mixture and soda water to creamed mixture. Work well with the hands.

Cover and store in a cold place overnight, preferably longer. Roll to infinite thinness on board.

Bake on greased cooky sheets in moderate oven, 375 degrees for a very few minutes or just until they begin to brown."

Many Scottish recipes are also used today, and the early Scots in Carolina are responsible for this tantalizing dish (Old English spelling) for Scotch Collops:

"Take a Legg of Veall and cutt it into thin Collops, & beat them well Seafon them with Nutmeg, fry them in Butter, when they are all fryed, take Clarrett, and Anchovies disolve them on ye fire, them take Strong broth, and gravy and put to them with Yolks of Eggs mix them well together, then put your Collops altogether into ye frying pan, with that you fry'd them in, then put your Sauce to the, hold them over ye fire, Shaking them well, till they be thick, then dish them up with Balls and Ollives."

The Pennsylvania Dutch Settlers in Carolina added their tasty culinary via recipes brought from their native Rhine valley. Sauerbraten is still a pleasant surprise for the family table, and the recipe has remained almost unchanged in three centuries of cooking.

Some of the most delicious colonial dishes were provided by the coastal waters and rivers. In turn, the fish, clams, oysters, and lobsters provided a livelihood

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for many of the Carolina shore residents. "Old Christmas" celebrated on Hatteras Island for over 250 years, has as one of its main features a tremendous oyster roast, enjoyed by islanders and many visiting tourists.

Although the colonial kitchen lacked modern conveniences, it is easily seen that the tables of our forefathers lacked nothing in plentiful and tasty food. Some aid was given to the housewife in 1742 when the first American cookbook was published in Williamsburg. It was entitled *The Compleat Housewife*, and written by E. Smith.



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